

CLUE

A SHUICHI SAIHARA FANZINE

On behalf of the CLUE zine contributors and mod team, we hope you enjoy our free mini-PDF celebrating Shuichi Saihara's Birthday! We present this free PDF as a gift of gratitude for the overwhelming support and encouragement we have received throughout the zine's creation.

Disclaimer

This project was incredibly relaxed, allowing artists and writers to freely create anything they wanted for Shuichi's birthday. However for that reason, various ships can and will make an appearance throughout, please proceed with this in mind!

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MARI



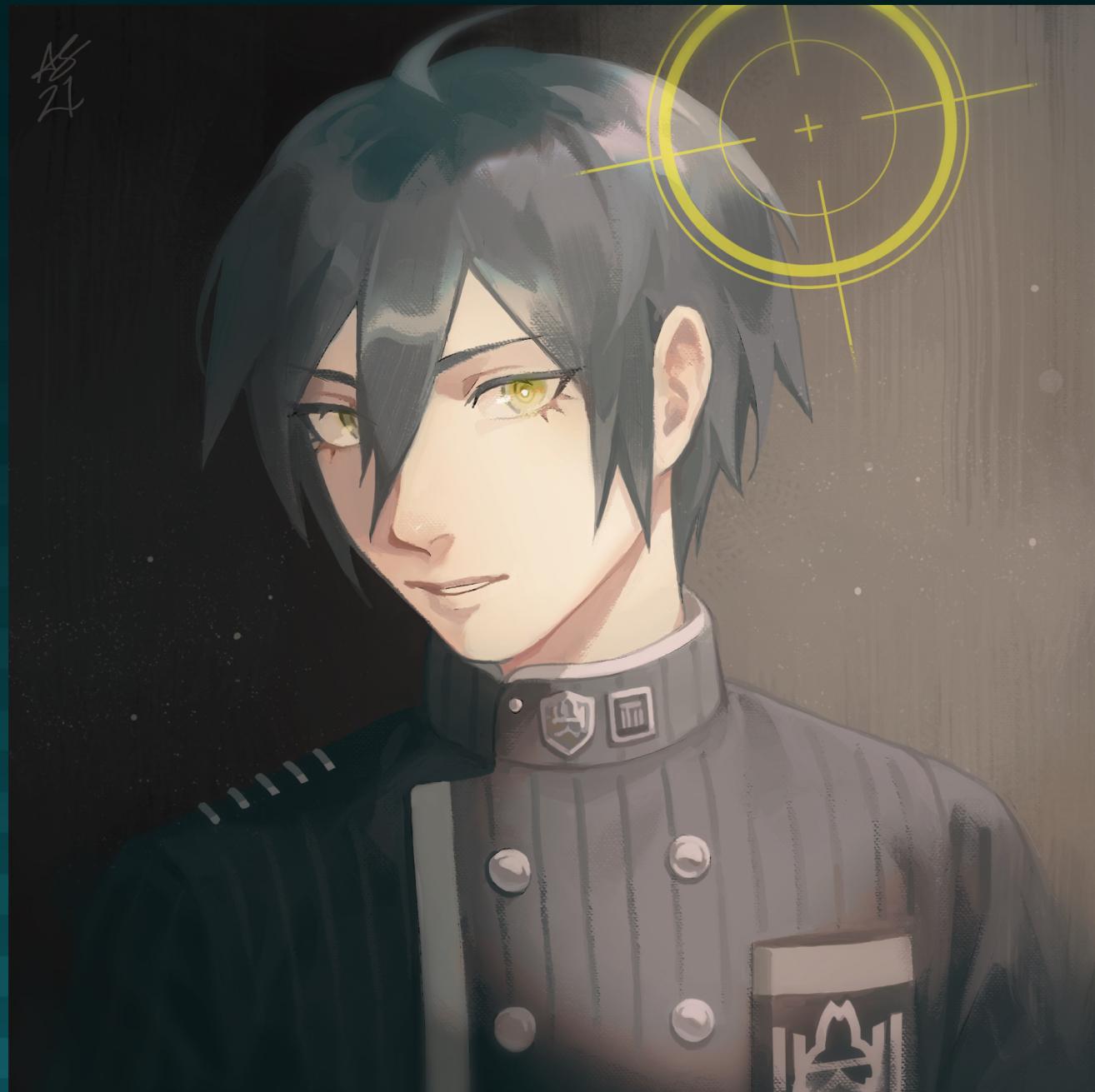
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DRIFTWOODWOLF



DRIFTWOODWOLF



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MINNTER



MERRYMINT



MERRYMINT

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CASSIEDOUGHGIRL



CASSIEDOUGHGIRL



CASSIEDOUGHGIRL

CASSIEDOUGHGIRL

IT'S ALL ABOUT GETTING USED TO IT

GOLDEN-REDHEAD

Saihara isn't used to nice things.

He knows survival. He knows how it feels to stare death in the eyes and he's intimately familiar with the feeling of despair and clinging desperately to any hope that's left, searching for a way out. He knows how to tell the difference between a body that's been dead for an hour and that of a person that's been gone for over a day. He knows how to get someone to confess and how to recognize a liar.

What he doesn't know is how to live.

His brain is filled with memories — some real and some not — from two lifetimes he wishes he could forget. Both contain scarcely few good memories in them.

When Team Danganronpa representative informs him that he's been assigned an apartment with Momota and Ouma and asks whether it's fine or not, Saihara can only blink. He wonders, vaguely, if his answer even matters. It feels more like a formality, yet another way for Team Danganronpa to secure their position in case he decides to pursue legal action.

The man in front of him grows impatient the longer the silence stretches between them.

"I'll take it as a yes," he huffs finally and scribbles something on his documents.

A lack of answer is also an answer, Saihara concludes.



Each day starts more or less the same. Saihara likes the routine. He likes the inevitability of it. The stability of things that are sure.

He nods gratefully when Momota slides a plate in front of him and immediately reaches for his coffee, wrapping his fingers around his favorite mug and feeling the warmth seep through it. The strong aroma fills the kitchen and he closes his eyes, inhaling the familiar scent.

"I'm gonna go get Ouma," Momota announces and Saihara winces, an apology resting heavily at the tip of his tongue. It stays there, useless, because Momota is out the door before he could even open his mouth, already climbing the stairs leading to their bedrooms.

Soon enough, he hears the muffled scream of Ouma being freshly woken up from yet another nightmare coming through the paper-thin walls of their apartment, followed closely by Momota's soothing voice as he tries to calm him down. Saihara doesn't even notice when his knuckles whiten, his grip on his mug tight and the line of his shoulders tense.

It takes another fifteen minutes until Momota brings Ouma downstairs, his hand resting at the small of his back as he guides him to his chair and offers him a plate with an encouraging smile.

Sometimes, Saitara wonders what they would do without Momota, wonders if Team Danganronpa planned all of this and assigned him as some sort of babysitter to watch over the two of them, knowing that they wouldn't last a day. They are just as lost now as they were straight out of simulation, barely holding it together despite Team Danganronpa's best efforts of keeping up the illusion of their newest invention being the future of the killing game and reality shows everywhere. There will be no lasting consequences for the contestants, they said. Our simulation system is safe and fully tested, the well-being of our contestants is our priority, they said. Saitara can recite every lie from memory, he can tell that all these interviews he's been made to attend are nothing but damage control.

He doesn't mind being an inconvenience to Team Danganronpa, he doesn't mind shattering that little illusion of theirs, destroying the lie of their own creation. He knows it and they know it as well.

He sighs and reaches for his fork, hoping to force at least a few bites past the lump in his throat. He doesn't want all of Momota's effort to go to waste.



The truth is, Saitara is not quite sure what to do with himself.

There's no job to come back to, no school, no family that he knows of. His past had been successfully erased by Team Danganronpa and there's nothing waiting for him. He left the apartment, once, for all of ten minutes, only to be chased back home by a bunch of fans, immediately recognized and followed all the way home. They moved the next day.

Momota was the only one who left regularly and just watching him go through all the trouble of trying to disguise his identity was exhausting. He's surprisingly good at it, though, especially for someone whose entire persona was crafted to be someone who strives for recognition.



He's curled up on a sofa, pretending to read a book when Ouma marches into the room and drapes himself over the back of the sofa, his calculating gaze resting on Saitara's hunched form.

"Saitara-chaaan," he sing-songs cheerfully, and Saitara wishes he could stop the wince that forces its way on his face.

Fake.

Ouma's voice sounds fake, so incredibly fake as he forces himself to emulate his in-game persona, clinging to the person they used to know him as, even though they all know it's not him. It was never him.

The uncomfortable sensation at the pit of his stomach squirms and shifts unpleasantly and Saitara sighs tiredly and meets Ouma's eyes.

"What is it?"

"Do you remember that?"

Ouma's head is tilted to the side and there's a grin frozen on his lips that doesn't reach his eyes. The question seems to be asked innocently enough — even if it doesn't make much sense — but the intensity of his gaze feels deceptive.

Saihara swallows, his heart slamming against his ribs. “Remember what?”

“What you said in the game,” Ouma says easily, his voice too light to be anything other than a fraud.

And Saihara doesn’t need to ask what he means by that, he doesn’t need him to clarify or explain.

He knows exactly which words Ouma is referring to.

You’re alone. And you always will be.

His mouth feels very dry when he says, “I do.” He swallows, suddenly feeling nauseous. “Ouma, I’m so so—”

Ouma giggles. “Nishishi, me too!”

And then he skips out of the room, still giggling, while Saihara lets the crushing weight of guilt settle heavily in between his ribs.

He knows it’s there to stay.



The door to his room opens and then closes just as quietly, followed by the sound of steps crossing the distance between the door and his bed. He can feel his bed dip under the added weight.

Saihara stifles a small groan.

“You’ve been sulking.”

“I’m not sulking,” Saihara mumbles into his knees, pulling them closer to his chest.

Momota’s quiet chuckle is sympathetic but it still makes him feel even worse.

“Wanna talk about it?”

“No.”

Momota sighs, but he doesn’t argue. “Okay,” he says. “I just wanted to make sure that you know that Ouma isn’t mad at you.”

“He hates me,” Saihara moves his head the other way shamefully, away from Momota, staring into the distance with unseeing eyes. The words bounce uselessly in his head, replaying over and over again like a broken record, his voice dripping with cruelty he never thought he would be capable of.

Momota sighs again, dragging his hand over his hair.

“He’s not,” he says and Saihara wonders how he can sound so sure. “Honestly, I think the only person Ouma actually hates is himself.” He turns to look at Saihara, a small fond smile playing on his lips. “I think you two have that in common.”

Saihara doesn’t say anything despite the words of protest that come to mind. He can’t bring himself to voice them.

Momota stands up and ruffles his hair.

“Just... Think about it, okay?”

And with that he’s gone, leaving Saihara alone with his thoughts once more.



He wakes up to the smell of baking.

He whines quietly knowing that he won’t be able to just turn to the other side and go back to sleep now, the smell too tempting and the sun that sneaks inside through the window too bright. Still, he stalls for a few more minutes before he releases a resigned sigh and gives up, sitting on his bed and rubbing his eyes, blinking the last traces of sleep away. He grabs a sweater with a small yawn and pads down the stairs in his fluffy slippers, heading to the kitchen, lured by the smell of freshly baked cookies.

“Saihara-chan!”

Before he can react, Ouma throws himself at him, hooking his arms behind his neck. Saihara stumbles back, almost tripping, suddenly finding himself with a handful of Ouma.

“O-Ouma-kun!” he chokes out, a mix of shock and surprise.

“Momo-chan is making cookies!” Ouma babbles excitedly, pretending not to hear him.

“Ouma, let the man breathe!” Momota yells after him.

Ouma sticks his tongue at him and then turns back to Saihara who can already feel the headache swelling in his temples, too much information too early in the morning. “And I helped!”

Saihara manages a small smile. “That’s great,” he stutters, unsuccessfully trying to pry Ouma’s arms away from his neck. “I’m sure they’re gonna be amazing.”



He finds them in the living room.

Momota is sprawled over the sofa, Ouma curled on top of him with his head tucked under his chin, his unruly hair brushing against his neck. Momota’s arm is wrapped around Ouma’s waist in a gesture that can only be described as protective, pulling him close even in his sleep. Ouma’s hand is resting close to Momota’s heart and Saihara freezes in the doorway, feeling like an intruder, feeling like he’s seeing something strangely intimate that’s not meant for his eyes.

He gnaws at his bottom lip, staring for a moment too long, fighting some sort of internal battle, and then sighs.

He finds himself climbing the stairs and gently pushing the door leading to Momota’s bedroom open, searching for a familiar sight of a galaxy print. Moments later he’s back in the living room, spreading Momota’s favorite blanket over Momota and Ouma’s sleeping forms.

He stares for a moment, a warm, content feeling spreading in his chest. Somehow, it feels right.

Momota gets the plants, Ouma helps to name them and Saitara does his best to stay as far away from them as possible.

It's the best he can do, he reasons with himself. He's just doing his part.

There's very little he remembers from his previous life — from the life before Saitara Shuichi — but if there is one thing he remembers it's that he was never good with plants. And he has a feeling that no matter how much Team Danganronpa altered, that one thing remained unchanged.



Ouma, Saitara discovered, cannot be trusted with groceries.

Well, the list of things Ouma cannot be trusted with is actually quite long, but right now groceries seem to be at the very top of it.

It's not that Saitara is completely delusional, he knew that Ouma's first time leaving the apartment might go wrong. And not just wrong but all kinds of wrong. In fact, he spent half the night coming up with various scenarios of exactly how wrong it might go.

What none of the scenarios accounted for, however, was that everything he bought would be pickle-flavoured.

Pickle-flavoured soda. Pickle-flavoured cotton candy. Pickle-flavoured popcorn.

Saitara has no idea where he even found all this and he has a suspicion that it might be better that way.

He sighs, rubbing tiredly at his eyes and reaching for his jacket.

"Momota-kun!" He calls in the direction of his room. It takes Momota only a few moments to come out, sporting an impressive bedhead and looking slightly alarmed, unused to Saitara demanding his attention.

"We need to get groceries," Saitara explains patiently, smiling apologetically and gesturing to Ouma who's grinning widely, not even a bit of shame.

It's the first time they leave the apartment together, all three of them.

They make the most unusual trio as they huddle together in their oversized coats and too many layers, scarves and hats and glasses that draw attention just as much as they disguise their identities.

And for the first time in forever, squished between Ouma and Momota as they go over their shopping list, he feels like he can breathe a little easier, the pressure in his chest gone.



"Happy birthday!"

Momota offers him a cupcake, smiling brightly, the flame of a single candle on top of it dancing and flickering.

Saitara blinks at it, confusion spreading over his features.

"... I don't understand." He frowns, looking up at Momota.

“Well, today is your birthday!”

“B-but... My birthday is September 7th,” he protests weakly, still so incredibly confused.

Momota opens his mouth but Ouma’s faster. “Silly, Saihara-chan! September 7th is your Danganronpa birthday!”

Saihara gapes stupidly.

Momota sighs.

“What Ouma means to say is that Team Danganronpa changed a lot of things about our past. Including our birthdays. Your actual birthday, the one on your birth certificate, is today.”

“Oh.”

That makes sense. Yet another thing Team Danganronpa stole from them.

There’s a dull throb somewhere in his chest, a phantom pain, a reminder about the life he lost that he’ll never get back. He should be angry, he should grieve yet another thing that had been taken away from him, but he knows the time for that will come.

He swallows the rage and the grief and with shaking hands, he reaches for the cupcake, smiling gratefully.

“Make a wish, make a wish!” Ouma insists, jumping up and down and tugging at his sleeve. He’s smiling and this time his grin almost reaches his eyes. It’s not quite there yet, but closer than ever before.

Saihara smiles shakily.

He leans in closer and takes a deep breath. He makes a wish. And then he blows the candle, Momota and Ouma cheering at his sides.

Saihara isn’t used to nice things.

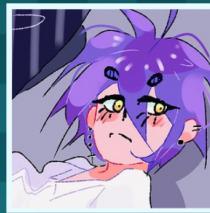
But he thinks that maybe he can learn how to get used to them.

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it's because of them... i was able to change.



FISH



OBSESSSEDFISH

CLUE

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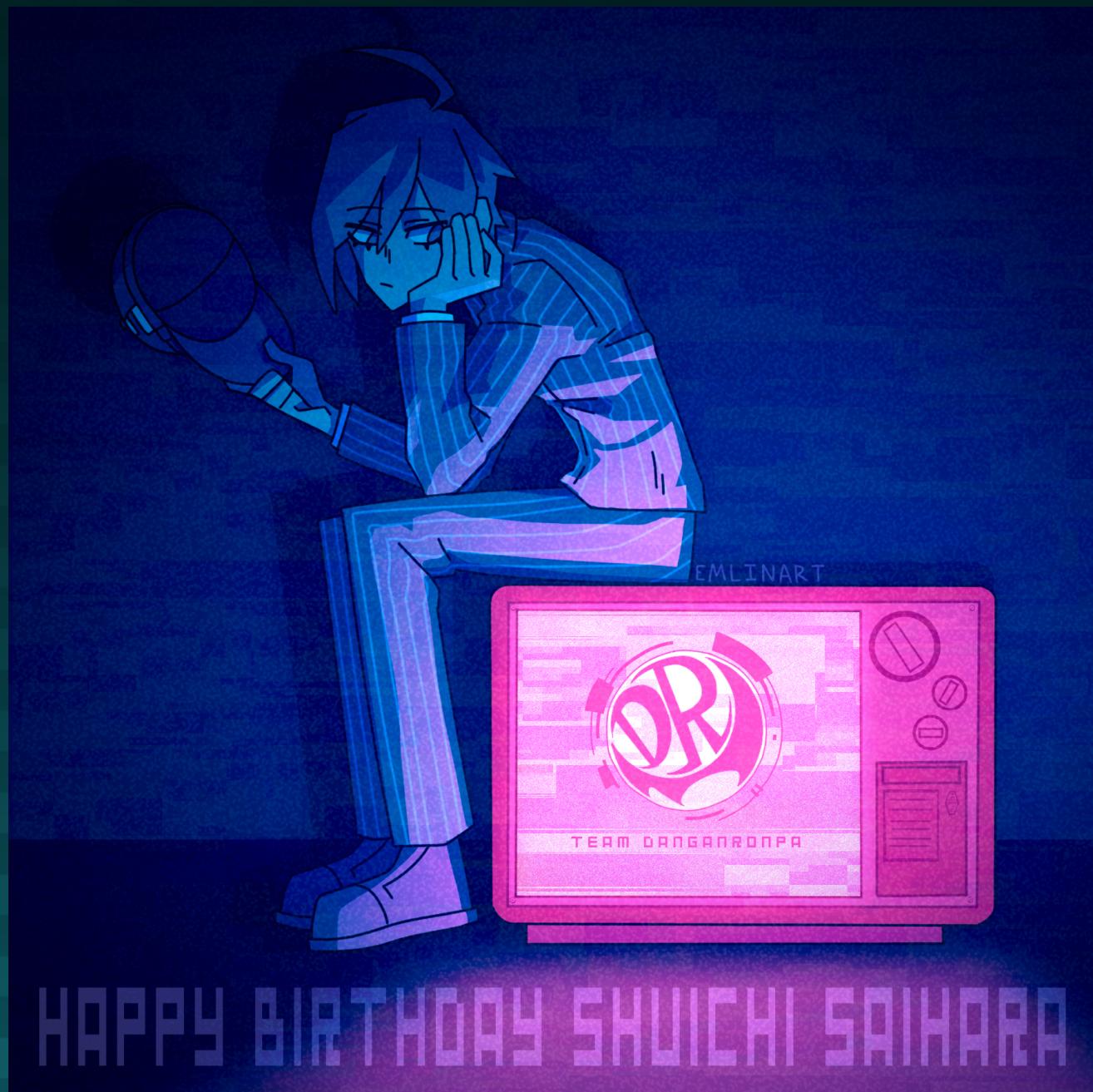
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HAPPY BIRTHDAY SHUICHI SAIHARA



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THE FEELING IS MUTUAL

KATZENJAMMIN

One of their casual rituals, set in place even before they started dating, was accompanying each other after class let out for the day. No matter where either of them was needed, the other would walk them there as far as they could before parting ways. More often than not, Shuichi would tag along with Miu to the robotics lab. Though if they needed to make a detour, like if he wanted to make a stop to return some of the books he had out, they'd gladly take the long route and head to the library first. Sometimes, there was a need to go off campus as well—to drop one of them off at the bus stop nearby, or to make a trip to the convenience store across the street, for example.

It's a nice reprieve, getting to walk around with his girlfriend, if only for a little while. Especially now that their schedules had gotten a lot busier.

A large part of it had to do with what was happening two weeks from now: Hope's Peak Academy would hold their annual talent exposition to showcase the bright, young minds of their students. Since all of the first-years were required to participate in the event, it was the main reason why their lives were so hectic these days.

So Shuichi appreciated whatever alone time he could get with his girlfriend, as it was in short supply these days. Still in its nascent stage, their relationship was a few months old, and some days he longed to see her and talk to her more than he could. Even if he saw her every day. It almost felt selfish of him, but wasn't it natural that he wanted to be with his partner?

"Miu, it's been a while since we've gone somewhere together," Shuichi mentioned, apropos of nothing on today's walk to the warehouse. This time, she needed help obtaining some supplies that weren't stored at the lab. He couldn't help asking her, in an attempt to make up for the time they weren't able to meet up this past week, "Would you like to go out this weekend?"

"Can't," was the inventor's single-word shutdown, linking her hands behind her head. "That's when I'm meetin' up with Kiibo to work on our talent exhibition."

Given the option to group up for the event, it made perfect sense that Miu and Kiibo would pair up, with how compatible their talents were. Consequently, they were spending more time together these days, and a significant number of Shuichi's own conversations with her centered on the upgrades she would give the robot. It wasn't unlike their usual talk about her work, when he'd give her the floor to brag about "blowing their cocks off" with her add-ons and update him on how they were going. She could talk at length, a gleam of passion in her blue eyes all the while.

But right now, he didn't feel like doing that.

"Oh." They came up to a split in the hallway, making a left turn as he inquired, "Will you be working on that with him all weekend?"

"Pretty much! I've got a whole lotta ideas to play around with his hardware. More than I know what to do with... I swear, there's never enough time in the world for my amazing genius!" She barked out a laugh, which was met with a more subdued chuckle from Shuichi.

"It really is great that you're giving your all for this..." Briefly, he trailed off, gaze flicking away for a second. "But you wouldn't have time for a quick lunch? I could bring food to you, if you want."

"Nah, I'll be fine. I recently added a setting to that machine that lets me eat while I sleep to let me eat while I work!" She grinned wide. "Brilliant, right?"

"Right. It sounds like you have an exciting weekend ahead of you." At this point, they had reached a side exit of the building. Shuichi opened the door for her, allowing his companion to go out before he did as well. "Maybe next week we can do something."

She looked at him, prodding his side with an elbow once he caught up. "What? Does my poor little private eye miss me? 'Cause you're acting more desperate than a bitch in heat!"

A frown came to his lips. "Th-That's a bit of an exaggeration, isn't it?" Or maybe he was coming on too strong? He flushed, a little embarrassed at himself as he continued, "It's not a big deal if you don't have the time. We've both been busy, after all. I just felt like if we could, we should, you know?"

Quirking an eyebrow, Miu crossed her arms. "That was a lot of words just to dance around my question!"

"...Oh, right." There was an awkward clearing of his throat. "Yes, I have missed you." Even if that was already apparent in his mind, or else, why would he have asked?

Though she seemed to want to hear it straight from him anyway, and her reaction only supported that theory. "But we see each other every day!" Despite saying this, she radiated satisfaction, closing her eyes with a content smile. "Well, I guess I can't blame ya for wanting more of this hot piece of ass! Otherwise you'd be a shitty boyfriend."

His expression was something like a fond grimace. Her manner of speaking had taken a lot of getting used to, but now he found it endearing in its own bizarre way; her ability to sexualize even the most mundane of topics was admittedly impressive. "It's more that I haven't been able to really talk to you outside of these walks for some time now. You're always focused on Kiibo lately, so..."

The girl stopped in her tracks, causing him to do the same with some confusion.

"What's that s'posed to mean?"

That question made him feel as if he'd said something wrong, but that didn't make much sense. She didn't seem upset at him, and there was no reason for her to be. Still, her look of slightly squinted eyes and furrowed brows made him want to squirm.

"What is what supposed to mean?"

"I mean, whaddaya mean I'm always focused on Kiibo? Why bring him up all of a sudden?"

Shuichi gave a small shrug, looking down at his shoes. "You do talk about him a lot. You sound like you're having a blast inventing modifications for him, which is fine, it's just—"

"Waaaiit, hold on a sec!" A black combat boot thrust out in front of him as she took a swift step forward, turning to plant herself right in front of the detective. Hands perched on her hips, she paid no mind to his personal space as she leaned in, compelling him to take a single step back. "Are you..." The final word came in unison with her finger jabbing into his chest. "...jealous?"

Shuichi stared at her, mouth agape as her words struggled to process in his mind. "What? Me?" he could only ask, yet she wouldn't back down, bringing the conversation to a deadlock. The accusation stunned him. Of all the outlandish things that Miu Iruma spat out on a daily basis, he wouldn't have expected this from her.

And naturally, his first inclination was to deny it.

"I—..."

...But he couldn't bring himself to. The doubt began to sink in, his habit of second-guessing himself rearing its head again. The possibility that she might actually be right on the mark rendered his tongue useless, avoiding eye contact while his fingers fussed with his front bangs. As he tried to formulate an answer, he thought back to the things he'd said up until now.

"Will you be working on that with him all weekend?"

"You're always focused on Kiibo lately, so..."

"You sound like you're having a blast inventing modifications for him, which is fine, it's just—"

"It's just" what? was the question he was left with, and now he wondered how he would have finished that sentence had she not interrupted him. The first thought that came to mind caused shame to wash over him: "I wish you would spend some of that time with me." It came off as needy and unfair to her. He didn't want to keep her from what she loved. But thinking again, it did coincide with his feelings of discontent over not seeing her as much as he wanted to. Of having to listen to her enthuse about his robotic classmate whenever they did talk. Of being turned down for a date so she could work on said robotic classmate.

"Wh-What's that look for!?" she squeaked out, making his body jolt as her exclamation yanked him out of his musings in an instant. Her finger withdrew from where it had pinned his shirt to his chest. "Are you mad at me?"

His hands raised with palms out, on the defensive. "Um—no, not at all! I'm sorry, I didn't mean to lose focus." Failing to recognize how intense his expression had gotten as he was lost in thought, he took a deep breath, trying to calm down so that Miu might lower her hackles. Thankfully she did, however slightly, her panic receding into a sort of antsy impatience for an explanation.

No, no matter how much he didn't want to admit it, he couldn't hide the truth from her.

Still, someone had to remember where they were. He focused his sights past her shoulder, then checked behind him. With Miu's general lack of awareness regarding social situations, he had to be mindful of their surroundings before they had this conversation. They were still on school grounds, though it was after hours, when not many people would be found on the side paths outside as they were instead of being at their clubs or in their dorm rooms. Once he was confident nobody else was around, he nodded, forcing himself to meet Miu's wobbly gaze again.

"I guess... I am jealous, after all," he quietly admitted.

"You are?" It was as if she'd forgotten that she was the one who accused him of feeling that way. Or maybe she just didn't expect to be right. Either way, the revelation seemed to surprise her as much as it did him.

He sighed. "...You're my girlfriend. Of course I'd feel weird about you hanging out with another guy so much." Immediately realizing how badly that might come across, he quickly clarified, "Not that I think you'd be unfaithful! Because I definitely know you wouldn't do anything behind my back, and, um..."

He found his words lodged in his throat as she turned on a dime, her back to him as she stepped away. And she wasn't saying anything. Why wasn't she saying anything?

His anxiety spiked at the lack of response. Had he upset her that much?

"Miu?"

A black-gloved hand came up to cover her mouth. It was only when she looked back, partially facing him, did he realize it was to cover a smile.

"Shuichi," she half-snickered. "...That's real fuckin' cute."

"Cute'?" he repeated, flabbergasted at the notion. Then he shook his head. "...There's nothing endearing about jealousy. I should know better."

"Psh, that kinda thing's natural, ain't it? Don't get your undies in a twist," she replied with a flap of her hand. "What I'm saying is that it's cute how clueless you are about how my golden brain works! So let me make this clear for you: Kiibo ain't a guy to me."

"Huh?"

"He's a fine piece of work!" she declared, laughing loudly; he moved back, dodging the spittle since he was in her line of fire. "I'm attracted to his ass the same way you'd be attracted to a brand-spankin'-new car! So ya don't gotta worry about him turning into a homewrecker. There, doesn't that make you feel better?"

"Uh, Miu, we're not married—" In all honesty, he was really pitying Kiibo right now. But Shuichi couldn't deny it was a little sweet, how she had just tried to cheer him up. He often had to look past the absurdity of her words to get to the real intent behind them—and what he had discovered at some point was that Miu could be a lot more well-meaning than the impression she gave off. "But... I suppose I do feel better," he said, smiling. "Thank you for, ah, reassuring me."

Her lips pursed as it seemed she had something else to say. Perhaps he wasn't out of the woods just yet.

"Really..." She hesitated, but not for long, abruptly throwing her fists down her sides in frustration. "I should be the one complaining, y'know! What about you and pig tits?"

He blinked. "Me and who?"

"Don't act like you don't know who I mean! You've been hanging around her a lot..."

Watching her fidget and shuffle her feet, it took a moment for Shuichi to pinpoint who exactly she was referring to. "You mean Kaede? I told you not to call her names," he chided her, eyes narrowing. "You know she's my best friend."

"Eep! Okay, okay!" Miu shrunk back slightly, as she was wont to do during these times, but her fire wasn't doused completely. "A-Anyway, I'm only with Kiibo so much 'cause we have shit to do, but y'all didn't even pair up and you're still attached at the hip!"

"That's an exaggeration. I hang out with plenty of other people, like Kaito and Maki..." That was actually it as far as people he regularly spent time with outside of school. That wasn't quite "plenty." Plus, Kaede was the person he was around the most... Okay, he kind of saw her point. It was still silly, of course, but he refused to be a hypocrite here.

"Yeah, but it's not like you had a crush on either of those fucksticks."

...And there was that too. Shuichi almost winced, the retort dashing his hopes that Miu would be merciful enough not to mention that part. "You don't think I'm still interested in her, do you?"

"No, dumbass! Erm..." She bit her lower lip, averting her eyes. "You said it earlier! That whole...feeling weird about bein' around someone else too much. That's it."

Ah. It was no wonder she'd seemed so satisfied earlier: she was probably relieved he felt that way, too.

"With you liking her in the past, it's way worse...say some old feelings happen to arise while I'm busy and you two are alone. I can't handle that! I'm the only one who's allowed to make things rise with you, got it!?"

"That's not going to happen," he replied in a firm tone.

Though he was as earnest as one could be, she didn't seem totally persuaded by his promise. But he supposed some things couldn't be expressed with words alone. Letting loose a soft exhale, he approached her, slowly to indicate his intent. Bewilderment flickered across her face, shortly replaced by comprehension once she felt his hand alight the back of her head. Soon, their lips met, eyes shutting as they both savored the feeling of it. At the same time, a light breeze picked up in the area, causing a few strands of her hair to tickle the side of his face.

The kiss was gentle and fleeting, but it was all he needed to convey that he absolutely meant what he was saying to her. Nevertheless, he thought it was prudent to drive the point home.

"I like you, Miu," he murmured once they parted. "And if you don't want me to hang around Kaede so much...have lunch with me on Saturday."

She agreed easily. "F-Fine. Smooth little shit," Miu mumbled lamely, red tinting the apples of her cheeks.

In the future, a deeper conversation about trust, envy, and the other complicated feelings that a romantic relationship involved might be needed. But on their way to run an errand at one of the campus's warehouses wasn't the place for it. For now, they could be content walking beside each other, hand-in-hand as they planned where they should go out to eat this weekend.

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